

REMARKS

Status of case

Claims 3, 5-6, 8-9, and 11-13 are pending. Claims 1, 2, 4, 7 and 10 have been cancelled.

Drawings

The Office Action objected to the drawings as failing to show the second spring recited in claim 4. Applicants previously provided ample evidence to the support for the second spring in the figures. To advance prosecution and not to be interpreted in any way as conceding to the objection, Applicants cancel claim 4.

Claim rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 3-5 and 8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Meeske (EP 0 351 438 A1) in view of Wayne (U.S. Patent No. 5,323,812) and Mullins (U.S. Patent No. 5,255,714). Claims 6, 9, 10, and 11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Meeske in view of Wayne and Mullins as applied to claims 3-5 and 8 above.

In rejecting claims 3 and 8, the Office Action acknowledges that the Meeske reference fails to teach a first sleeve and a second sleeve. The Office Action further states that the Wayne reference teaches a pipe coupling with a first sleeve and a second sleeve, citing elements 5 and 8 of the Wayne reference. Applicants respectfully disagree. For convenience, an excerpt from the Wayne reference is reproduced below:

Locking sleeve 5 is generally cylindrically shaped. Locking sleeve 5 has an exterior 90 and an interior 91. **The locking sleeve 5 is affixed to bumper 8 by means of a press fit 51 residing on the exterior 90 of said locking sleeve 5.** Bumper 8 facilitates easy uncoupling of the coupler and the nipple as will be discussed below.

Col. 3, lines 18-23 (emphasis added). As discussed previously, the locking sleeve 5 and bumper 8 are fixedly connected together, thereby constituting a single sleeve. Therefore, the Wayne reference, as a general matter, fails to teach the first sleeve and second sleeve, recited as two separate elements in claims 3 and 8. However, to underscore that the first sleeve and second sleeve are not part of the identical sleeve, Applicants amend claims 3 and 8 to recite that "said second sleeve [is] movable independently, at least partly, from said first sleeve". Therefore,

second sleeve [is] movable independently, at least partly, from said first sleeve". Therefore, Applicants believe that claims 3 and 8, and the claims that depend thereon, are patentable over the cited references

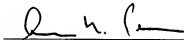
Double Patenting

Examiner has stated that claims 3 and 8 are duplicates or so close in content that they both cover the same thing, despite a slight difference in wording. Applicants amend claim 3 to recite the following: "A socket for use in a pipe coupling having a mating plug, the mating plug insertable into said socket for coupling engagement". Therefore, Applicants believe that claim 3 and claim 8 are directed to different subject matter.

Conclusion

Applicants respectfully request the Examiner grant early allowance of this application. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney for the Applicants via telephone if such communication would expedite this application.

Respectfully submitted,



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